

Attendees

- **Steering Committee Members**

- Chris Hayes
- Rita M. Mercier
- Camilo Espitia
- Mona Tyree
- Narin Sinuon
- Perry Downs
- John Hamblet (Chip Hamblet)
- Jerry
- Joseph Boyle
- Adam Baacke
- George Deluca
- Melissa Desroches
- Allison Lamey
- Matt Lucas
- Felice Kincannon
- Ethan Yang
- Wayne Jenness
- Michelle Rivera
- Bopha Boutselis
- David Turcotte
- Sanary Phen
- Louisa Varnum
- Steven Oliver
- Beth Tripathi
- Neyder Fernandez
- Tania O. (Valerie)
- Yun-Ju Choi
- Austin Hill
- lala books
- Luciano Paskevicius
- Mary Wambui (Ciiru Ekop)
- Carl Howell (he/his/him)
- Cormac Hondros- McCarthy
- Amada Gregory
- Claire V. Ricker
- John Hamblet

Agenda

01. Plan Process Update

02. Upcoming Community

Engagement

- a. Website and Social Media
- b. Community Organizer introduction
- c. Survey 1 Citywide Workshop 1
 - i. How SC members can help
 - ii. Network building

03. Lowell Today: Initial

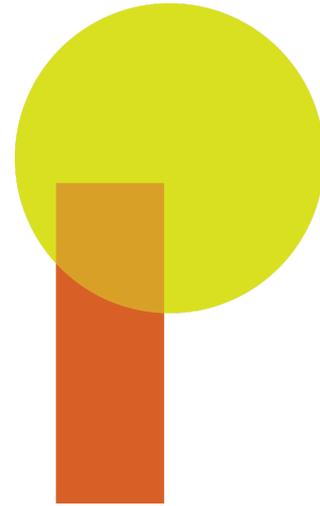
Observations

- a. Urban form
- b. Demographics
- c. Housing
- d. Economic Development
- e. Mobility
- f. Environment and Open Space

04. Break out rooms

05. Next Steps

- Cormac Hondros- McCarthy
- Matt Lucas
- Wayne Jenness
- Ryan Gilday
- Louisa Varnum
- **City Staff**
 - Francesca Cigliano
 - Camilo Espitia
 - Jess Wilson
 - Dylan Ricker
- **Consultant Team**
 - Matthew Littell
 - Will Cohen
 - Andrea Baena
 - Taskina Tareen
 - Rahi Patel
 - Avery Robertson
 - Mercy Anampiu (Community Organizer)



Notes

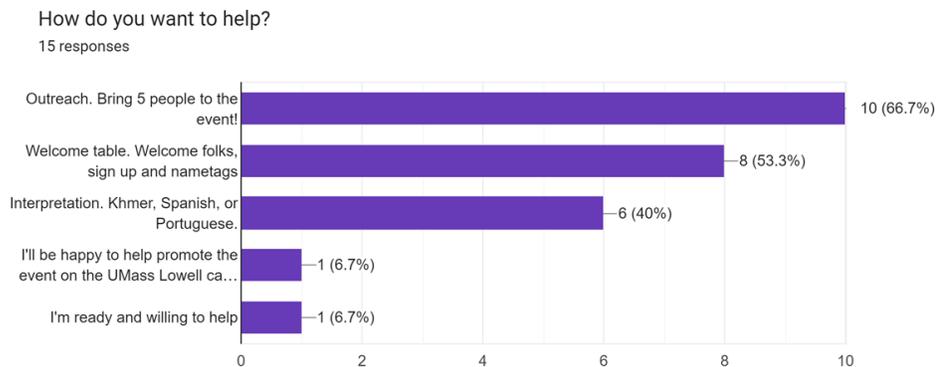
01. Plan Process Update

- a. Andrea reviewed the components of a comprehensive plan and explained how Lowell Forward’s approach is integrating the different planning topics the City has worked on to date.

02. Upcoming Community Engagement

a. Upcoming Engagement

- i. Andrea introduced the Committee members to the project website, Instagram account, and Facebook page. Committee members are asked to spread the word!
- ii. The project’s first survey, [Vision and Values](#), is public! Committee members are asked to share the survey link with as many community as possible.
- iii. The first Citywide Workshop will take place on February 1, 2023 from 6:30-8:30pm at the Lowell Senior Center. Committee members are needed to help organize and run the Citywide Workshop! Please respond to the [survey](#) if you are interested in helping out.

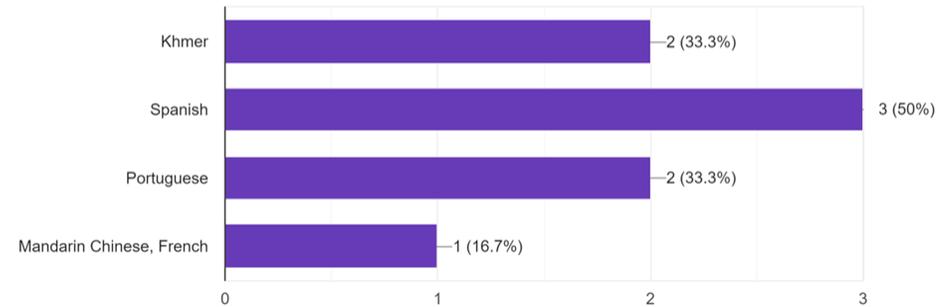


Steering Committee Meeting #2 Notes

12/07/2022 | 6:30 - 8:00pm

If you chose interpretation in the previous question, what language would you be able to help us with?

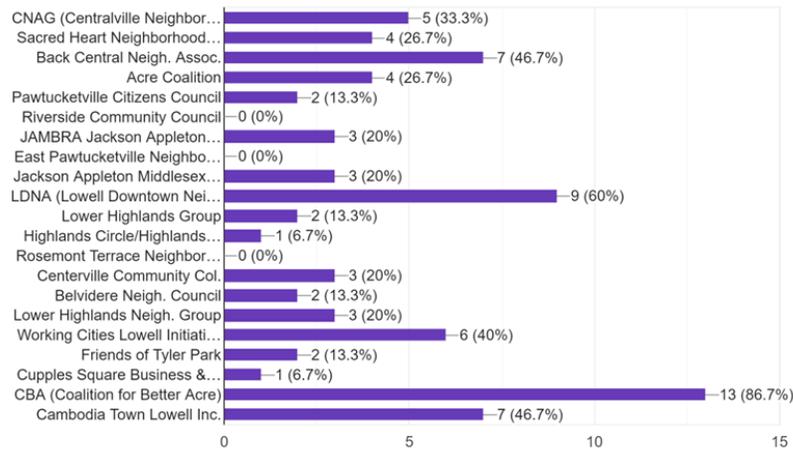
6 responses



- iv. Committee members can fill out [this form](#) to help the planning team reach contacts in underrepresented groups throughout Lowell.

Select up to 6 groups that we should prioritize for Neighborhood Meetings.

15 responses



Are there other neighborhood groups that we should engage in the Lowell Forward Comprehensive Plan? If so please list them below.

3 responses

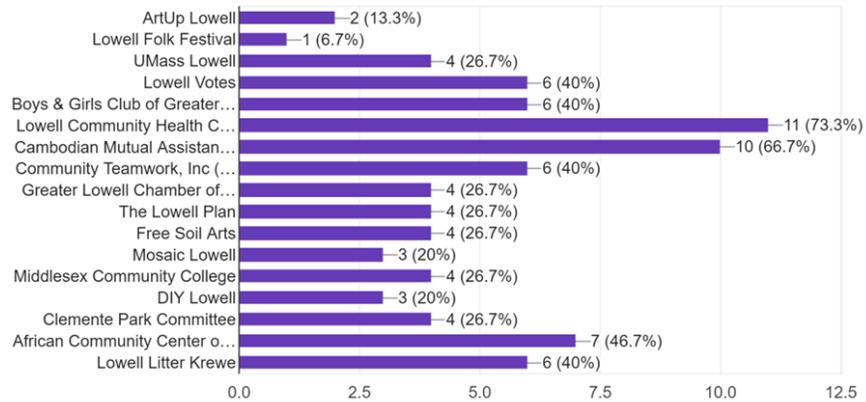
Lowell Sustainability Council

South Lowell Neighborhood Group

I don't know if Lawrence Street has a neighborhood group or is Lawrence Street considered Back Central neighborhood.

Select up to 6 groups that we should prioritize for Focus Groups.

15 responses



Are there other topic-specific groups that we should engage in the Lowell Forward Comprehensive Plan? If so please list them below.

6 responses

- Lowell Alliance (non-profit) and MAPS
- 350 Mass or any climate related group
- Renaissance on the River. This community is surrounded by UMASS Lowell and negatively impacted by proposed development.
- DEI Consortium of Lowell
- UTEC.
- YWCA, Women's Money Matters, Youth Organizations, Youth Development Organizations, Youth Creational, Social Service Organizations, YouthBuild, CTI-Youth Program, Girls Inc. Youth Homelessness Organizations

b. Community Organizer

- i. The planning team recently welcomed Mercy Anampiu, who will serve in a Community Organizer role for Lowell Forward. Mercy will work to increase engagement with Lowell community members, especially those who have been historically underrepresented in planning processes. Mercy can be reached at lowellforward@utiledesign.com

03. Lowell Today: Initial Observations

a. Urban form

- i. Taskina outlined initial observations regarding urban form. Lowell Forward will guide future land use and development decisions, so it's



important to create a shared understanding of how Lowell's physical and spatial structure works today.

- ii. **Land Use:** Lowell's existing land use is typical of New England communities. Most land is zoned as residential, with a mixed use urban core. A number of physical barriers are visible throughout Lowell's neighborhoods.
- iii. **Zoning & Recent Planning Efforts:** Lowell's existing zoning code does not reflect the diversity of development throughout its neighborhoods. The City has undertaken numerous planning efforts throughout the past decades, mainly focused around downtown. Lowell Forward has an opportunity to integrate these efforts into a vision for the future of Lowell.
- iv. **Shared Mental Map:** Taskina introduced the draft shared mental map of Lowell, which is an abstracted map classifying Lowell into different districts based on characteristics of their built environment. Taskina shared examples of photos of these different place types, which are a framework for thinking about the different uses and characteristics of Lowell's diverse neighborhoods.
- v. The planning team's primary considerations focus on asking how we can connect Lowell's downtown to its neighborhoods and open space and if there are other opportunities in Lowell that the planning team may not be able to immediately identify.

b. Demographics

- i. **Population:** Lowell's population continues to grow and outpace other gateway cities. Lowell is also becoming increasingly racially diverse. While racial diversity has increased, communities of color are concentrated in central neighborhoods. Zoning districts with more commercial and industrial uses contain more people of color than more suburban neighborhoods.
- ii. **Income:** Income growth in Lowell has also outpaced other gateway cities. However, this growth was not experienced equitably. Income growth varies across racial groups. Suburban areas are higher-income, while central neighborhoods tend to have more diverse income ranges.
- iii. **Housing Stock Age:** Lowell's housing stock is very old. 77% of housing in Lowell was built before 1960.
- iv. **Employment:** Lowell's unemployment rate is low compared to other gateway cities and the state overall, though some neighborhoods have higher-than-average rates of unemployment.

c. Housing

- i. **Housing Types & Neighborhood Connections:** Lowell is home to a diverse housing stock, though most of its land contains single-family units. Neighborhoods are separated by large infrastructure such as roads and natural barriers such as the Merrimack River.
- ii. **Housing Cost Burden:** Renters in Lowell are more cost-burdened than owners. While owner real incomes have gone up since 2010, renter incomes stagnated over the same period.

d. Economic Development

- i. Will Cohen discussed economic development insights related to Lowell's job growth. Healthcare-related occupations have had the fastest growth in the past decade. Lowell's institutions provide training with many fast-growing sectors, though many of the city's graduates are graduating into sectors that are shrinking in Lowell.
- ii. Businesses in downtown have not yet fully recovered from the impact of COVID. Most businesses still have fewer open hours than before COVID.
- iii. Lowell is unique in that it's part of the Boston metro region but it is on the edge of the state. The majority of people leaving Lowell to go to work or people coming into Lowell to work tend to come from nearby communities. Only 5% of outbound commuters are going all the way to Boston.
- iv. Lowell's anchor institutions are a major source of employment.
- v. Lowell's rent growth compares favorably to the country overall. Lowell's office and retail vacancy rates are lower than the county overall. Commercial rents are highest in downtown, which is not always the case in this state.
- vi. Lowell's finances are related to its land use. Most tax revenues come from property taxes. There is an opportunity to ensure that the tax burden is distributed between residents and businesses.

e. Mobility

- i. Most Lowellians drive alone to work, but one in six Lowell households do not own a vehicle. Households with no vehicles available are more dependent on carpooling, walking, and public transportation to get to work.
- ii. Lowell's existing mobility network is car-centric. It does not serve road users who are not in vehicles. There are opportunities to improve mobility for people using all modes of transportation.

- iii. GoLowell is a planning process that is looking comprehensively at Lowell's transportation network. Lowell's accidents are concentrated on the roads with the most traffic.
 - iv. There has been a lot of work around the riverfront and some work related to bike infrastructure, but there is work to be done to make pedestrian and bicycle networks safe.
- f. **Environment and Open Space**
- i. Lowell has a large number of open spaces and there are numerous ongoing efforts to more equitably distribute open space funding and access opportunities throughout Lowell.
 - ii. Open space also plays a role in public health. For instance, heat islands are formed through large amounts of pavement (such as parking lots). The coolest places on hot days are those shaded by trees and surrounded by natural features - making equitable open space access a critical component of Lowell's public infrastructure.
 - iii. Lowell also faces some risks from worsening floods. Floodplains must be considered when making new decisions related to land use and future development.

04. Break out rooms

- a. Room 1: Will (facilitate) + Jess (notetaker + answer City specific questions)
- i. Introductions
 - Adam Baake, UML
 - John Hamblet, Pawtucketville, LPS
 - Luciano Pasketvicius, Downtown/Lowell Alliance
 - Matt Lucas, Centralville
 - Austin, Acre, Car-less
 - Mona Tyree, Centralville, works Downtown. Nonprofits, community endeavors
 - Neyder, UML Student Body President, Nonprofits
 - Ryan Gilday, Resident (many neighborhoods), lawyer
 - Wayne Jenness, Downtown/City Council District 4
 - Ethan Yang, Resident Downtown HCID, car-less, LRTA user -> Billerica
 - ii. Reminder to fill Surveys/Polls:
 - iii. Beyond the vision survey, what else do you think would be helpful to ask the community at this stage?
 - i. Lowell Today: Are the initial observations presented an accurate depiction of Lowell Today from your experience?

- Austin: agreed it is a broken-up city, mobility challenges
- Wayne: Agreed broken bike lane network, walking is difficult to get around, major streets difficult to cross. May want to include UML buses in transportation discussion.
- Mona: Very interesting to see all in a plan put together. Non-driver. Bus depot used to be downtown. Good change but lacking for non-students in downtown. Live and work in Lowell, 15 minute walk to work. Have to hop 10 buses to get to employer.
 - a. Will: Makes it harder for people who already have it the hardest. Its a tricky problem
- Adam: Generally accurate. Need more recent data, plan for longer time horizon. Last 2 years have been so dramatic. Hard to capture what has changed since COVID. Land Use Map needs additional scrutiny - generated from land ownership? University is not represented as institutional entity. Single biggest institutional land user in the City. That's a very important map moving forward. Income observations - been concerned for a long time about nature of household incomes in Lowell - when adjusted for inflation, paints a very different picture than actual dollars. Encourages that adjustment to understand changing demographics and economic capacity, capacity to pay taxes, etc. Important point to spend time thinking about. Helpful to have some exploration of municipal services in the survey. What do people expect of their City and how is the City doing? Major asset is the built environment - physical urban design/form - Lowell has a lot of very intact historic neighborhoods, not necessarily well-maintained or preserved, built at a time when everything had to be walkable. City has been adapted for cars, opportunity for Lowell to built on. Built environment as an asset. Real interest in living in walkable urban places. Key to economic opportunity in the city - grow tax base, build on appeal. COVID has tamped down enthusiasm for core cities, people still want walkable experience. Questioned commercial rents graphic - office rents tend to be higher in some areas than downtown. Non-market rents may be skewing data. Lack of vacancies... suggest highest retail market rents in neighborhood commercial districts catering to SE Asian community.
 - a. Will: Census data just recently released, difficult to get more up-to-date data. Land use data - based off tax assessor info. Not totally accurate categorization of use types. Businesses - super helpful. After breakout room.

Hesitate to dive into human outreach until Mercy was on board. All based on cold data sources. Talking to community members, not just about the needs of residents but the activities of commercial activity will be an essential component of outreach.

- b. Wayne: Retail rents vs. occupancy rate - would be interesting to have for residential. My census tract has 99% occupancy - people want to live downtown. Would be interesting to see how that track across the city.
 - John Hamblet: Smiled at slide about barriers to neighborhoods. Live in pawtucketville - merrimack river was not mentioned as a barrier. Most of Pawtucketville goes north for entertainment, jobs. Suggestion that there may be flood plains, had 2 100-year floods in... also into centralville. Lowell general saints campus not marked on map - almost same size as main campus. ...Manor on...avenue major employer worth mentioning. Colonial Lowell history gets ignored. Would love to see it reflected. Interesting when we talk about people who are rent-burdened. We have the lowest rental and housing costs in the region (within 20 miles?) balanced vs. low income. Does more housing answer the question? Better Jobs? Education slide - include Middlesex Community College in numbers. Fascinated 76% of Lowellians drive to work. Parking study says we don't have nearly enough parking and a housing study says we have too much. Need to resolve conflict. Looking at zoning revisions that would reduce parking spaces - need to sort out conflicts.
 - Ethan: Since moving in, 2 new parking structures have been built within a 2 minute walk, 100 new parking space. 6-7 Parking garages. Makes the city feel more empty than it should be. As someone who uses LRTA, have learned that bus services provided before covid have been heavily reduced, lines have merged. Much less frequent. Should be taken into consideration for mobility. COVID has influenced data. Even if not as comprehensive as 5-year census, caveats should be considered moving forward.
 - Will provided email as breakout room ended before everyone had a chance to talk
- iv. Lowell Today: What are other key things about Lowell you want others to know, and important to this Plan?

b. Room 2: Matthew (facilitate) + Rahi (note taker) + Dylan (answer City specific questions)

i. Introductions:

- Bopha, High school teacher lives in Centralville
- Jerry, lives in Pawtucketville, fourth generation to live on the same street, Vice Chair of Planning Board, lived and worked in Lowell whole life
- Melissa Desroches: Centralville, lived here her whole life, same home as her grandparents, Centralville Neighborhood Action Group
- Laura Lamar Anderson: Grew up in South Lowell, lives and runs business downtown
- Beth Tripathi: Education Policy Specialist for Massachusetts Teachers Association, works with public school PTOs, lives in Belvidere
- Yun-Ju Choi: Works for Coalition for a Better Acre CDC, lives in Pawtucketville
- Sanary Phen: Coalition for a Better Acre, Economic and Workforce Development, Cambodian-American Arts Organization, lived in South Lowell since 1987
- Steven Oliver: Professor at Salem State University, lives in Renaissance on the River that is on the riverwalk, Acre neighborhood, recently joined board of Project Learn
- Carl Howell: Work at Community Teamwork CDC, headquarters in Lowell but serve 72 communities

ii. Discussion:

- **Jerry:** I serve on NMCOG and a lot of the observations seemed accurate as far as what I've looked at through NMCOG. The housing patterns show how immigrant families came to Lowell for generations. We have a diversity of housing and that diversity of housing means that people can find any type of housing that they are looking for at that point in their life. We don't have a lot of land, but we have a lot of housing choice. Obviously, as the population grows that is a challenge.
 - a. **Matthew:** Certainly. A lot of you live on the same streets you grew up on. It could be useful to understand how people move within the city.
- **Steven:** I've had concerns about the new construction. Parking structures going up and the Lord Overpass construction. I live around UMass Lowell and take issue when UMass calls the

whole area East Campus. They've announced plans to develop a lot of the green space around me and I'm noticing the absence from UMass Lowell from the planning discussions so far. It seems they're making plans and those plans are independent of the process.

- a. **Matthew:** UMass is represented, but that coordination is important.
- **Beth:** I noticed a lack of analysis on the types of facilities available at open spaces and where those open spaces are. An analysis about the equitable distribution of those parks and how folks get to them without cars is important.
 - a. **Matthew:** I think that's precisely the point we should look at. A finer grain understanding of recreational spaces and indoor facilities as a whole would be an important thing to understand as we move forward. And that includes other community support institutions like health centers. We want to understand what physical access looks like. Especially for the many people without cars.
- **Laura:** I was glad to see the focus on the connectivity. I live in downtown and it's hard to get to a lot of parks. There are big barriers. If I want to eat in Little Cambodia, I would drive because walking is so hard. Traffic, a lack of sidewalks...
 - a. **Matthew:** That's definitely something we should take a look at in more detail.
- **Carl:** I saw the zoning map and it's mostly zoned for single-family. In a lot of ways, that counters the idea that we have a diversity of options. Specifically when we think about neighborhood choice. You can't live in certain neighborhoods if they don't have a certain kind of housing within a certain price range.
 - a. **Matthew:** We noticed that pattern throughout a lot of the city.
- **Melissa:** As a teacher in Centralville, my school is an all-city school. We have students coming from all neighborhoods. Once they go home on the bus, there's little opportunity for them to return to school facilities. We lack community centers in neighborhoods. There's the Boys and Girls Club and a few rec centers but they're not in every neighborhood and can be very hard to access by walking for kids.

- a. **Matthew:** Definitely. Some of those gaps have to do with legacy industrial uses. The river is the river, so it's worth thinking about how recreation along the river may relate to those conversations. We should map and identify areas with need for things like community centers.
- **Jerry:** I'm interested in the economic development aspect, especially downtown. If you could figure out patterns of the neighborhoods and their contribution to the downtown economy. The downtown is concerning- there are a lot of resources being put in there, but we're not seeing good outcomes. How can neighborhoods support downtown businesses? Make it more inviting to people in various neighborhoods?
- **Steven:** The area behind the Tsongas Center is up for development by UMass Lowell. That's a highly utilized green space, especially for residents of River Towers adjacent to that. The Riverwalk itself is not plowed when it snows. People use it to move throughout the city and they need to treat it like a city street that should be cleared when it snows. It's been a challenge to get them to think about the Riverwalk as a piece of infrastructure.
- **Yun-Ju:** The transportation hub used to be downtown and since that's moved, people are not going downtown as much as they used to. That's something I hear from the people I work with. With a historic district, there are a lot of barriers for business owners. Renovating and maintaining historic buildings is a huge cost. There's some funding available, but developing a historic building is a cost that is just not feasible for most business owners. So when we think about downtown development, we have to think about historic preservation guidelines and their relation to economic development.
- **Sanary:** I want to tie everything back to accessibility and housing. As someone who has grown up here since the early 1980s, it is hard to navigate transportation without a vehicle. To get from one end of the city, there's bottlenecks of traffic. A lot of repairs have been neglected for so long and now they're all happening at once. When the bus system was located downtown, it became a hub for activity. Without that foot traffic, there is just not going to be as much business there. We also have to think about workforce development. A lot of these areas with dense housing are because families are purchasing

multi-unit dwellings and housing their whole families. The cost of rent is going so high - unless you're buying, Lowell is very expensive when you compare the rent to the median income. A lot of the younger generation are climate-conscious and would like to get around responsibly. If they had a transit system they could use feasibly, you'd probably see a lot of use.

- **Beth:** I want to echo the public transportation piece. The UMass Lowell system has an incredible campus bus system. In Amherst, the community members and campus members use the same regional bus network. In Lowell, there's only access for UMass affiliates.

c. Room 3: Taskina (facilitate) + Avery (note taker) + Fran (answer City specific questions)

i. Introductions:

Taskina Tareen

Francesca Cigliano

Allison Lamey: Director of Lowell Plan and Economic Development; Mosaic

Cormac Hondros-McCarthy: Small business owner, on the sustainability council

Joseph Boyle: Used to be planning office; planning board;; contributed to last plan; highlands; schools

Valerie: pawtucketville resident; young living program as case manager

Maxine Marcus: Artist; acre western ave lofts "which you ignored completely in your data" degree planning and historical geography, retired now

Vivian: Works in Downtown Lowell; lives in Chelmsford; participated in two other master plans "this is so different than other plans I worked on."

Rita Mercier: Lowell city councilor; been in Lowell for 27 years; former mayor; middlesex chiefs office for 18 years - not retired.

Mary Wambui: Live in Highlands, Lowell resident

Louisa Varnum: Lowell resident whole life; conservation commissions for city of Lowell.

ii. **Lowell Today: Are the initial observations presented an accurate depiction of Lowell Today from your experience?**

Maxine: I think your numbers for arts and entertainment are very low. They don't reflect the reality of what's going on in the

city at this point and time. For example, just at western ave there is artist live work space with 50 units with 70 tenants and there are 250 artists working studios, with another 300 people there. Right in that little tiny space on the “wrong side of canal / railroad track” we have 400 people in arts, that doesn't include other groups in city, and performing artists. “You need to take a look at that.” For the last 20 years Lowell has encouraged artists to come here, “we’re very vocal you can't ignore us.”

Allison: I think what's important is the recognition of the arts and culture scene to our economy both indirectly and directly. Economic driver. We've seen during pandemic the impact of those closures... the downtown particularity relies on our cultural venues. When we don't have activities and events you see the dramatic impact that has.

Taskina: Arts and culture can be a topic on its own or it can expand across all topics, it's closely related to the creative economy but also how people experience spaces, how people use open spaces and parks, how we meet around neighborhoods and connect with each other. But to Maxine's point, we should do a deeper dive into it in the Lowell community.

Joseph: I want to agree with what you said about highways and highway like roads cutting off the neighborhoods from the downtown and each other. The VFW highway is preventing the pedestrian traffic from Centralville and revitalizing the downtown. Most of downtown is surrounded by highway or roads too wide for food traffic.

Joseph: Lowell takes arts and culture seriously as an economic and jobs driver, not just a quality of life thing. Lowell is taking it seriously, it has paid off wonderfully and the city should continue.

Allison: I agree with Joe. The river and canals, and the barriers it creates. We joke about “one side of the river and the other” but it is challenging to connect the two. In the last plan, there was reference to finding opportunities to leverage the waterways that we have. Few opportunities to dine along the canal, or do more than just stroll or bike. Ways to activate the canal ways and find more connections along the river.

Rita: Lowell is “the little Venice of the world” . We have a jewel that we don't really utilize. I'd like to see gondolas along the canal.

Taskina: we do see the bones of the canal and river, but the reality on the ground is a different experience. **Curious to hear people's relation to the canals.**

Max: I live on the pawtucket canal. When I said that “we’re on the wrong side of the canal and tracks” that's what we are, completely isolated. Bus 30 min away. Other areas of the city have the same issues. Until public transit can adequately serve. For example the Market Basket on Broadway is the only major grocery store in the city, other grocery on the periphery. No buses to market basket. Created a food desert. Will see elderly people up school street with bags of groceries. There needs to be equitable access to transportation.

Cormac: on transportation, I know one of our employees was commuting from the train station from Somerville. He brought his bike. Roads are not safe enough from the train station to highlands. Decent roadways... The question is how to get the city to spend the money on bike mobility. It's not necessarily people not wanting to bike, they give up on it cause they try once or twice and it's too dangerous so it's not worth it.

Taskina: Role of downtown vs role of nodes or activity areas, creating access to these other nodes - is that a meaningful path to pursue?

Valerie: We are on Lawrence st. focus on parenting and independent living skills. Challenge where we are because residents don't feel safe. Huge substance abuse and unhoused population - people constantly being approached. Challenge to promote healthy living and good parenting. We're very close to downtown. Medical providers and resources were connecting them with (that are vital to teach them) they don't feel safe accessing because of the crisis.

Vivian: Agreed

Joseph: the neighborhood commercial districts are better than downtown at filling commercial space. Funny that 20-30 years ago revitalizing downtown was thought to stabilize neighborhoods, now we need the reverse - neighborhoods to revitalize downtown.

Vivian: Downtown has problems. Homeslessness, drug use, high school kids, vandalism. I don't know the answer, there might need to be more attention paid to mental health. It's tough to make a living, to make ends meet.

Maxine: Used to be a part of Lowell cultural council - community meetings, go into neighborhoods and find out what they wanted.

Consistently ask them what to take to go downtown. Why go downtown? Have everything needed in their neighborhood. Take that, lack of easy public transport. If you don't have that access... listen to FB groups about parking downtown. If you can't get a [parking] spot you're not going. Need rethinking of what public transportation is supposed to be doing for us residents, how to move people through the city easily.

Rita: [clarification of presentation point]

Mary: There's a lot of vacant lots and industrial areas. Want to bring up the issue of parking minimums. Is this something this plan is going to think about? There's a need for more open space and affordable housing.

Taskina: On a very high level, yes. That's directly related to the goals... on a more granular level there has been a parking study done....

Joseph: the central plaza really cuts off the neighborhoods from downtown. Giant parking lot.

d. Room 4: Andrea (facilitate) Camilo (notetaker + answer City specific questions)

i. Introductions

- Chris Hayes: NMCOCG
- Michelle Rivera: Real estate agent
- David Turcotte: resident in Pawtucketville, work at UMass Lowell
- Perry: resident at the highlands, commissioner at conversation commission
- George de Lucca: artist and photographer, live in the acre
- Mercy Anampiu: community organizer
- Narin: resident of Lower Highlands, work in IT from home
- Amada Gregory: live in downtown, community outreach, voice of the hispanic immigrant community
- Felice: live downtown, work part time at Greater Lowell Community Foundation, work with Lowell City of Learning and Refuge Lowell
- Claire Ricker

ii. Discussion

- **Felice:** your observations were spot in from my experience, but I'm having trouble connecting those observations to what we're trying to accomplish
- **Andrea:** initial observations that Matthew was describing are questions that could guide the next steps in the plan, what are

the priorities that this plan should focus on. Should we focus on connecting neighborhoods to each other, to Downtown, to areas of activity. Should we focus on other opportunity areas beyond downtown? These are questions that could be opportunities of what the plan could tackle in later phases

- **Camilo:** glad you say they're spot on. We want to see if this is where we still want to be in the next 15 years. Are there things that should change? We saw that there are disparities in income, spatial disparity of educational attainment, and how people move around the city. Once you understand the data and you realize it relates to your experience of the city
- **Felice:** is the purpose of this plan to redirect in a positive way the geography, mobility, economics of the City.
- **Andrea:** The plan will provide a guide for future decisions around policymaking and investment that will move us toward our shared vision. How do we ensure that all communities have access to economic opportunities, how do we improve mobility, how do we connect places in the city, how do we prepare for climate change. Set a framework that will be helpful for city staff and other stakeholders as they make those decisions moving forward.
- **Michelle:** I appreciate your question Felice. Being that we clearly want to see changes in all for those areas. Do we just present ideas that are then discussed and taken into consideration. Who makes the final decision as to the ideas that we bring to the table.
- **Andrea:** I will pass it on to Camilo to talk about how the plan will be approved and implemented.
- **Camilo:** as a community we need to have an updated master plan every certain number of years. The plan doesn't dictate changing zoning, but it will dictate how we approach housing. The change needs to be approved by the council, implemented by certain departments. The decision comes from the community, and the council should follow what the community is asking. This is about giving ideas and the comments that you have for what you think should change. We're asking the community to tell us what they want to see in the next 15-20 years. We are the Steering Committee, we get to vote and make comments. But the most important thing is that we make sure that we hear from the community. We'll do this by making suggestions, asking questions, and providing ideas.

- **Michelle:** we have these conversations and then through community engagement we get additional comments from the community. But then we need to pass it through the council. We need to make sure that the people who make the decisions
- **Camilo:** this is the opportunity to be loud about it. It will be hard for the council not to pass something that the all community wants.
- **Felice:** what can we learn from the previous plan that has not been implemented much?
- **Andrea:** First it is important that this plan builds on top of the previous plan. Second, a lot of things have changed since 2013, so we might need to adapt some principles. Third, we need to create an implementation framework that will lead to action and serve as a guide for decision makers but also for community organizations to advocate.
- **Camilo:** one of the problems with the previous plan was that there was not really a strong implementation framework. The community was probably very clear on what they wanted, but the plan was not as clear about how to get there. In this plan we want to lay out very specific actions with specific appointed responsibilities. There are some things that have been accomplished from the previous plan, some things have been finished, some things are still in progress, some things are not relevant any more because the context has changed.
- **Michelle:** Is there any way to get a copy of the previous plan? So that we can compare the previous plan to help us come up with new solutions.
- **David Turcotte:** has there been as assessment done on what has been accomplished
- **Andrea:** the city is doing this as part of our existing conditions analysis, and will be helpful as a tool as we move forward with this plan
- **David:** are you going to try to identify what are the challenges and the barriers for implementation
- **Camilo:** I like what you brought up David, it is important to understand what was done and what was not, and understand what were the barriers.
- **Chris Hayes:** I wish there was more time in these break out rooms to have these discussions. From the regional perspective, we do an annual report where we look at jobs and understand

Lowell's economic niche and how we can make community businesses grow.

iii. Main take-aways

- Data of existing conditions is spot on but having trouble connecting observations to what we are trying to accomplish.
- The planning team reiterated the Master Plan process is to give the voice to the community to speak and inform what they want to see and accomplish in the future based on what they want to change in these existing conditions.
- The planning team also reiterated that the Plan is to provide a guide for how we make decisions in the future. policies, economic opportunities, mobility, income, housing, climate change.
- Group wanted to see changes in some of the areas of concern but wondered how these changes will actually happen. Implementation is a concern.
- Group wondering what we can learn from the previous plan and how to understand what prevented some of the implementation from the previous plan from taking place.
- Group asked if we have an assessment of what has been accomplished from the previous plan.
- Group asked for more time in breakout rooms.
- Group stated that the Plan should have a regional perspective to understand Lowell's niche and business growth and economic opportunities as a region.

05. Next Steps

- a. Citywide Workshop 1 is taking place on Feb. 1st at 6:30pm at the Lowell Senior Center
- b. Contact Mercy at lowellforward@utiledesign.com to schedule a one-on-one conversation
- c. The Lowell Today interim report will be completed and shared with you for feedback

